



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Constitutional Recognition Good for the Community

There have been questions raised by Tasmanian councils in relation to the level support for a referendum seeking the recognition of Local Government in the Australian Constitution.

Acting LGAT President, Mayor Deirdre Flint, said members of the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) have formally supported the efforts of the Australian Local Government Association (which represents the interests of all Australian councils) in pursuing constitutional recognition for Local Government, through voting at the LGAT General Meetings.

“Seeking to include Local Government in the Constitution is about recognising the role of Local Government in Australia’s system of government and more practically, about securing funding sources to deliver the services communities need,” Cllr Flint said. “In response to community demand, Local Government has become involved in much wider areas than the traditional property and roads infrastructure, such as recreation, health and welfare, with growing demand for more services.”

“As the closest level of government to the community, councils are in a unique position to identify community needs and to make sure that those needs are met in the most appropriate way. Federal and State Governments recognise this and seek to work in partnership with Local Government to deliver a range of services,” she said. “The need to remove the uncertainty, stemming from last’s years High Court decision in *Pape*, which has cast doubt on the power of the Commonwealth to continue to provide funds directly to Local Government, has been recognised by Federal Parliamentarians.”

Cllr Flint said the Labor Government has formally agreed with the Australian Greens and Independent, Andrew Wilkie, that the public should be asked about both Local Government and Indigenous recognition in the Australian Constitution. “Indeed, the Governor General also acknowledged the significance of these questions in the opening address to the new Federal Parliament late last month.”

Local Government is increasingly being called on to assist in delivering Commonwealth Government initiatives at local level. For example, as part of the National Stimulus Package in 2009 to counter the Global Financial Crisis, more than \$1 billion of funding was provided directly to Local Government as a means of promoting economic activity across the nation. In Tasmania, this equated to over \$20 million in funding in 2009 and 2010. Tasmania has also received \$11.4million in vital Roads to Recovery funding for 2010-11.

Cllr Flint said that the intent behind the proposed referendum is to alter the Constitution to allow payments directly to Local Government, removing funding uncertainty. “It will not change Local Government’s accountability or its status,” she said.

For more information, please refer to the Australian Local Government Association’s website at [www.councilreferendum.com.au](http://www.councilreferendum.com.au).

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**For further information or interviews, please contact Acting LGAT President,  
Mayor Deirdre Flint on 0418 319 832.**